



SAFETY MESSAGE

Personal Safety is our #1 priority

Snatch Strap Safety

Compiled by USDA-APHIS-CCEP

It's a lot easier to get stuck than to get out of it, but with a little help from a friend—and a snatch strap—you can be on the road again quite quickly. Successful recovery can be accomplished by the use of a (snatch strap). The snatch strap, connecting two vehicles, has special elastic properties, which allows it to expand as much as one meter, very much like an elastic band.

The strap effectively stores kinetic energy released by the momentum of the recovery vehicle. The resultant force is much greater than using a non-expanding towing rope, when the strap returns to its normal length. The snatch strap allows even a small vehicle to recover a much bigger vehicle in a recovery situation. Before attempting to use your snatch strap, ensure that there are no cuts or nicks in the nylon webbing, as even a 1cm tear can reduce the breaking strain by as much as 50%.

Ensure that both vehicles are lined up as straight as possible before commencing recovery. Connect each “eye” of the snatch strap with a “D” shackle to the appropriate mounting points on both vehicles. The snatch strap should be laid out completely flat on the ground, with no twists. All passengers and bystanders should stand completely clear of the recovery operation at all times. Once a snatch strap is connected to both vehicles, it is viewed as “live” and nobody should be allowed to step over it at any time.

The snatch strap should also never under any circumstances be attached to the towbar of the recovery vehicle. The actual tow-ball could break off and become a fatal bullet to bystanders.

If any of the vehicles do not come equipped with proper mounting points, create a mounting point by wrapping chain around a suitable area of the chassis (not bumper). Bullbars are not suitable as mounting points for a recovery operation either. The golden rule is that your mounting point should also be directly part of the chassis of both vehicles. Ensure that there is at least two meters of slack in the snatch strap, before attempting the recovery. Place a towel or blanket over the middle of the snatch strap to act as a “parachute” if any of the mounting points or “D” shackles should fail.

Any rocks, tree trunks or obstacles in the recovery path should be removed beforehand. The front vehicle should accelerate at moderate speed when “snatching” a stuck vehicle, using preferably low range second gear. The driver of the stuck vehicle should engage the same gear and be ready to release the clutch at exactly the same time as the recovery vehicle.

If this fails to recover the stuck vehicle, repeat the procedure, but this time marginally increase the acceleration speed of the recovery vehicle. If the recovery vehicle cannot be brought close enough to the stuck vehicle, for fear of getting bogged down as well, two snatch straps may be connected to each other. Hook the “eye” of one snatch strap through the “eye” of the second snatch and pull a sturdy piece of wood through the protruding loop. Never use a “D” shackle to connect two snatch straps. It could turn into a lethal missile under strain. Remember to clean your snatch strap, check the tension, and keep it out of direct sunlight.